

## *Utah National Guard Linguist helps Bridge the Gap*

*By Spc. Adam Bradley, 139th MPAD*

Over 400 United States service members and roughly 150 Nicaraguan Special Forces gathered into one base camp, “la comunicación entre dos militares puede ser difícil,” with a unique mission. That is where 1LT Dylan M. Reyes-Cairo, Duration Staff Command Interpreter and Linguist Coordinator, and his rotation linguist’s units help. 1LT Reyes-Cairo, originally from the 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion, Utah Army National Guard, said there are many factors as to why he volunteered for Joint Task Force Chontales, the 2002 New Horizons military humanitarian mission.

Most of his Spanish was refined during his two-year LDS mission in Mexico, but a lot of his training came from the influence of his Cuban father. With this strong Spanish background, he was well qualified for the Joint Task Force Chontales assignment. But mainly he volunteered because “I love the language, and I enjoy speaking it.”

He has been in Nicaragua from the start in mid-January 2002, spending most of his time with the Nicaraguan Army and helping to harmonize the interactions between both militaries. “It’s great because I feel like I’m in the mix at every aspect of the operation,” said 1LT Reyes-Cairo.

Along with first-rate assistance from Army National Guard linguistic units, consisting of four to 15 members depending on rotation, the communication barrier between the groups has narrowed. “We’ve established a fantastic relationship with



*Photo by 139th MPAD*

*1LT Dylan M. Reyes-Cairo, a member of the 142nd MI Bn, using his linguist skills as the staff command interpreter and linguist coordinator at a jungle base camp in Nicaragua, in Central America.*

the Nicaraguan Army,” said 1LT Reyes-Cairo. “A great mutual respect has developed.”

Interpreters, who are speaking and thinking at least twice as much during any conversation, are necessary at the construction sites to coordinate security issues and schedules. But they’re also needed at the medical and veterinary sites to communicate with the citizens. “We can’t do it without them. They are superb,” said LTC Richard Young, clinic physician and doctor assigned to the medical readiness training exercise in La Batea. “The more the translator is able to work with us, the easier it is to help out our patients.”

Joint Task Force Chontales is named for the region in Nicaragua where U.S. active duty personnel, along with National Guard and Reserve military

units from all four branches trained in two-week rotations from January to May 2002. The training improved the readiness of U.S. Engineer and support units by conducting overseas movements and the construction of schools and medical clinics with the cooperation and assistance of the Nicaraguan government. The U.S. medical personnel received excellent training by providing hands-on health and dental care to Nicaraguans, as well as the U.S. Forces participating in the operation.

Joint Task Force Chontales is a part of ongoing exercises in Central America that provide humanitarian aid and civic assistance projects for the host nation and joint training opportunities for the U.S. Armed Forces, active and reserve components.